



Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy  
Floor Statement as Prepared for Delivery  
Murphy Amendment #15 (Iran in Syria)

*H.R. 3494, Damon Paul Nelson and Matthew Young Pollard Intelligence Authorization Act for  
Fiscal Year 2020  
July 16, 2019*

Thank you Madam Chair.

Our amendment would require the Director of National Intelligence, in coordination with the Secretaries of State and Defense, to prepare a report for Congress on efforts by Iran to establish long-term influence in Syria using both hard and soft power, and the threat this poses to U.S. interests and allies, including Israel.

Syria's civil war, which began in 2011, has brought an influx of Iranian and Iranian-backed forces into Syria.

Iran and Syria are both designated by the United States as state sponsors of terrorism. Their military partnership dates back decades, and Iran regards Syria as one of its most important allies.

Iran and Iranian-backed forces, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hizbollah, have provided manpower, training, weapons, and funding to the Syrian government led by President Bashar al-Assad.

This assistance, coupled with support from Russia, have enabled the Assad government to retain or regain territory in Syria, and the Assad government currently maintains control over roughly two-thirds of the country.

Iran's goals in Syria include protecting the Assad government, increasing Iran's regional influence, threatening Israel from a closer location, building weapon-production facilities and other military infrastructure, and securing a land bridge that would connect Iran to Hizbollah's stronghold in southern Lebanon via Iraq and Syria.

It's clear that Iran is seeking long-term influence in Syria, and is pursuing this objective through military, political, and social means.

Iran's effort to establish a military presence in Syria has led to repeated confrontations with Israel. In February 2018, Israel shot down an Iranian drone flying over Israeli territory and then targeted the base in Syria from which the drone was launched. In May 2018, Israel launched strikes against

Iranian military installations in Syria, Iran responded by firing missiles at Israeli positions in the Golan Heights, and Israel then targeted nearly all of Iran's military infrastructure in Syria.

Iranian and Iranian-backed forces also seek to enhance their influence in Syria through non-military means, such as purchasing strategic real estate, constructing Shia religious centers and schools, securing loyalty from Sunni tribes, and inducing the Assad government to open Farsi-language departments at Syrian universities.

In a startling move, President Trump has proposed to withdraw all or most U.S. forces from Syria, a proposal I view as a profound mistake.

But regardless of the number of U.S. troops deployed to Syria, I believe it is a vital U.S. interest to prevent Iran, Hizbollah, and other Iranian-backed forces from establishing an enduring presence in Syria.

Our amendment would require the DNI to assess how Iran is using hard and soft power to gain long-term influence in Syria. Among other things, the IC would examine how U.S. efforts to strengthen Kurdish forces in Syria could undermine Iran; how the U.S. helps Israel identify threats from Iran in Syria; and how Iran's influence over Syrian institutions could increase the likelihood that the Islamic State will reconstitute itself inside Syria.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment and I reserve the balance of my time.